

The Intonation of the Soul

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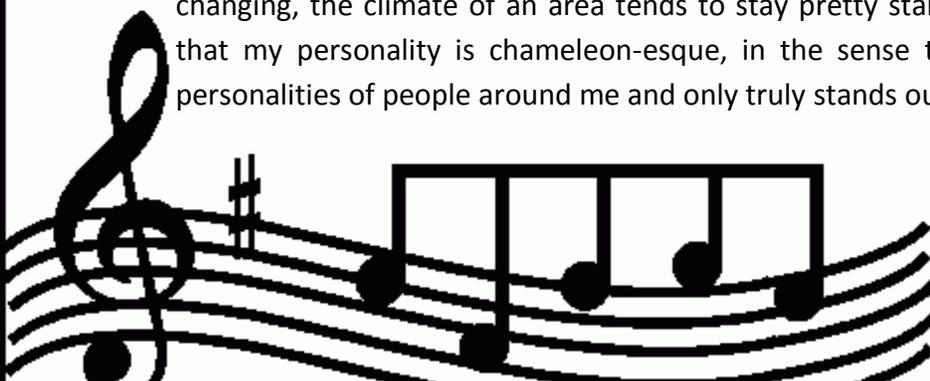
Music is a strong rhetorical device that surrounds us nearly every day of our lives. It excites the senses, comes in a variety of flavors and appeals to people differently based on their tastes; sounds kind of like ice cream, doesn't it? Unlike ice cream, a person's musical choices can tell a lot about them, specifically about their personality. This is a topic that I have much interest in, as music holds a heavy personal value to me. I will be discussing the rhetoric of music, the relationship between music and personality, as well as giving examples on the subject, and analyzing studies done to scientifically connect the two ideas together.

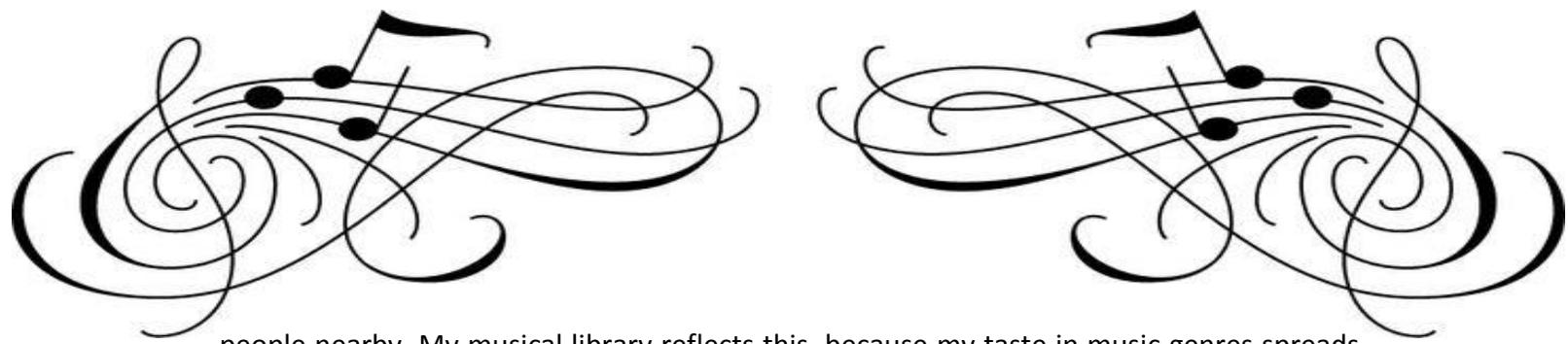
The Musical Flow of Rhetoric

In the realm of pathos, music can be used to evoke a specific emotion from the listener, while at the same time a person's emotional state can reflect the type of music they try to create or listen to. Music also holds a certain level of ethos attached to it, as the kind of music that a person listens to can definitely sway how people view that person's credibility on some subjects. Music can also change people's opinions on certain subjects and ideas. A lot of songs are chock full of logos and use this mode of persuasion to convey their point quite well. Normally, this is a strong point with love songs or break up songs because people can understand the feelings that they have through the lyrics. Lastly, music has a grand kairotic effect on our world, because depending on the time or place that a certain song is played, it can have a varying size of impact on the people hearing it. For example, a song about killing or death would probably be in poor taste to be played at a funeral.

Climatic Personalities and a Weathered Mood

Since music has such close ties to emotional appeals, it only makes sense that it also has a hand in a person's personality as well. As Dr. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, an international authority on psychological profiling, has said, "personality is to climate as mood is to weather." (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2011) Whereas the weather is always changing, the climate of an area tends to stay pretty stable. As an example, I would say that my personality is chameleon-esque, in the sense that it kind of blends with the personalities of people around me and only truly stands out when there are little to no



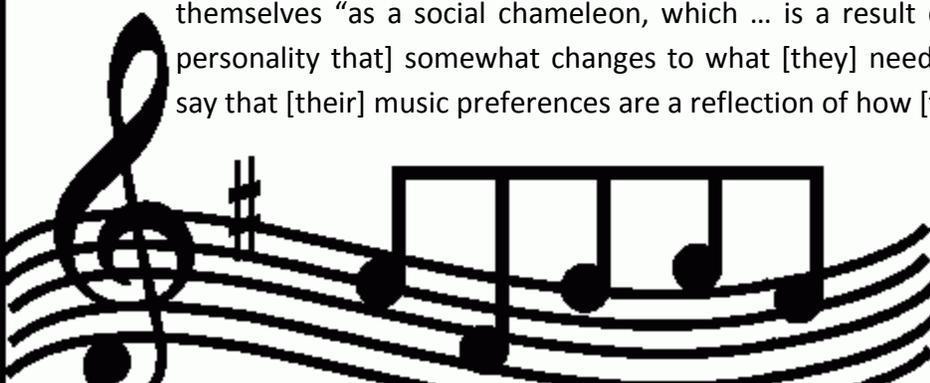


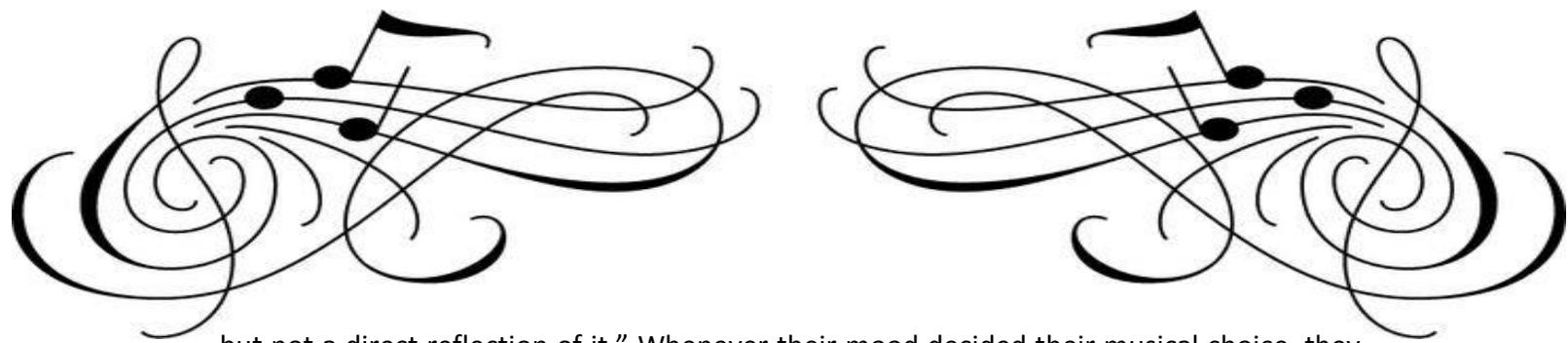
people nearby. My musical library reflects this, because my taste in music genres spreads to the far corners of the earth, ranging from rock to Asian pop to classical. I tend to favor electronic music a lot as well, which again is reflective of my personality, because the electronic genre tends to be connected to unity and equality as a concept. It also favors places where large groups of people gather and interact for the purpose of coming together and having fun, such as raves and parties, as its setting. Whenever my mood happens to fluctuate towards a certain pattern, the types of songs I listen to also sway in the same direction; if I'm sad or upset, I tend to listen to more somber songs with lyrics that connect with the situation I'm dealing with.

I went out and surveyed a few people to see how their personalities and musical taste matched up. One such person described themselves using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a personal questionnaire that one can use to discover their personality type, as INTJ (Introverted/Intuitive/Thinker/Judging), with a preference towards grunge, classic rock, psychedelic rock and pop music genres. They felt that all the genres fit their personality with the exception of pop, because that was a genre "more suited to extroverts". They claim their mood doesn't have an effect on when they listen to music, yet they "tend to listen to music when [they] feel like it."

Another of the surveyed also stated that they were introverted, but was also invested in caring for others, while claiming to have "eclectic taste" in music; they listened to what they like regardless of what genre it may fall in. I found this to be interesting, because it makes a lot of sense for this type of personality to not have specific favorite genres. One who spends a lot of time caring for others would more than likely end up liking music based on the personalities they interact with. They also liked to listen to the "emotions of songs" when their feelings are geared towards one direction.

The last person I surveyed gave some of the most interesting information on themselves. They described themselves as "adventurous, open-minded, fluid, welcoming, dominate, caring, calm, whimsical [and] creative." Their preferred music genres was almost every possible kind of music that exist "...except country." As an explanation, it kind of mirrored my own personality/mood/music relationship. They described themselves "as a social chameleon, which ... is a result of having a fluid personality[, a personality that] somewhat changes to what [they] need at that moment. [They] would say that [their] music preferences are a reflection of how [their] personality can manifest

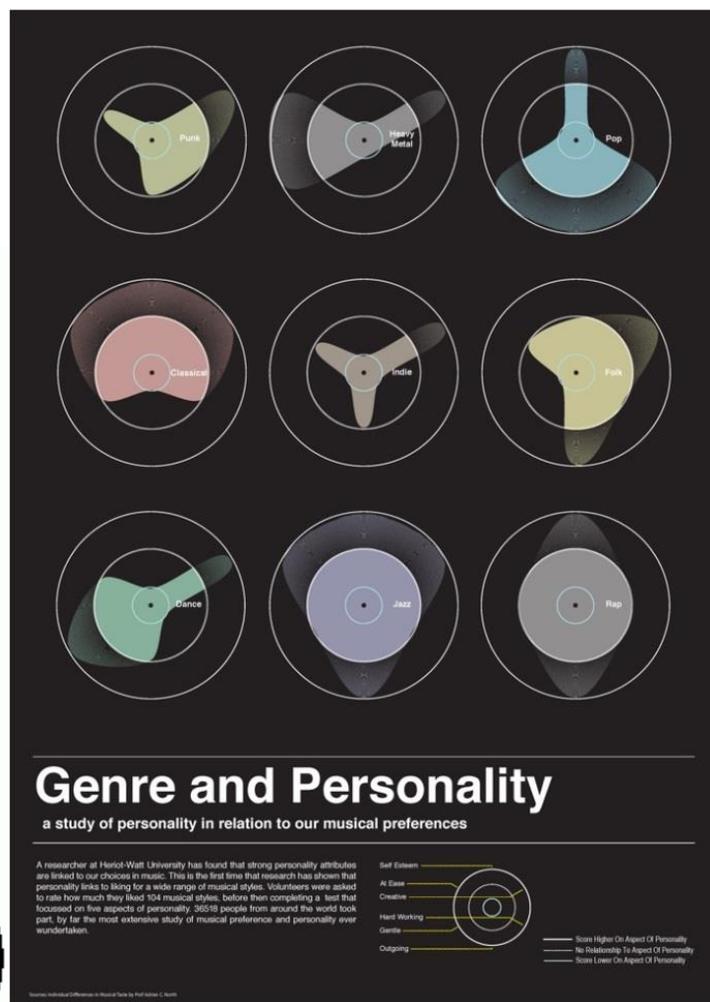




but not a direct reflection of it.” Whenever their mood decided their musical choice, they described it as an “emotional resonance... Based on the emotions [their] feeling at the time of the song choice, the [music] will probably be based on what can convey [their] feelings best at that moment.”

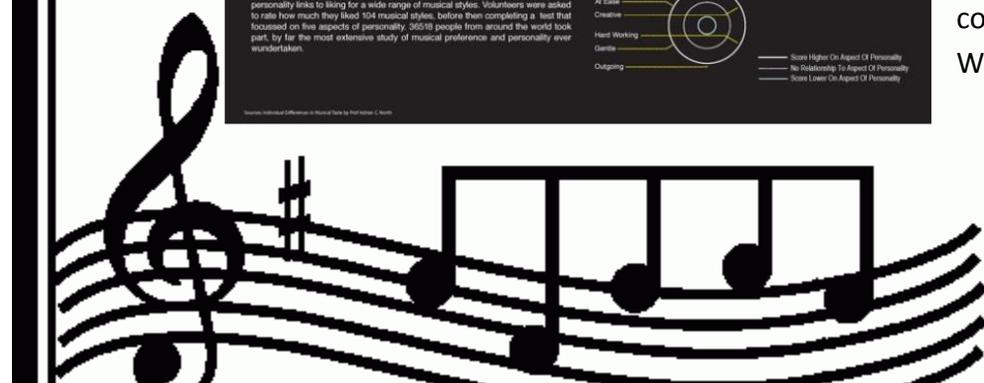
Track One: Mind

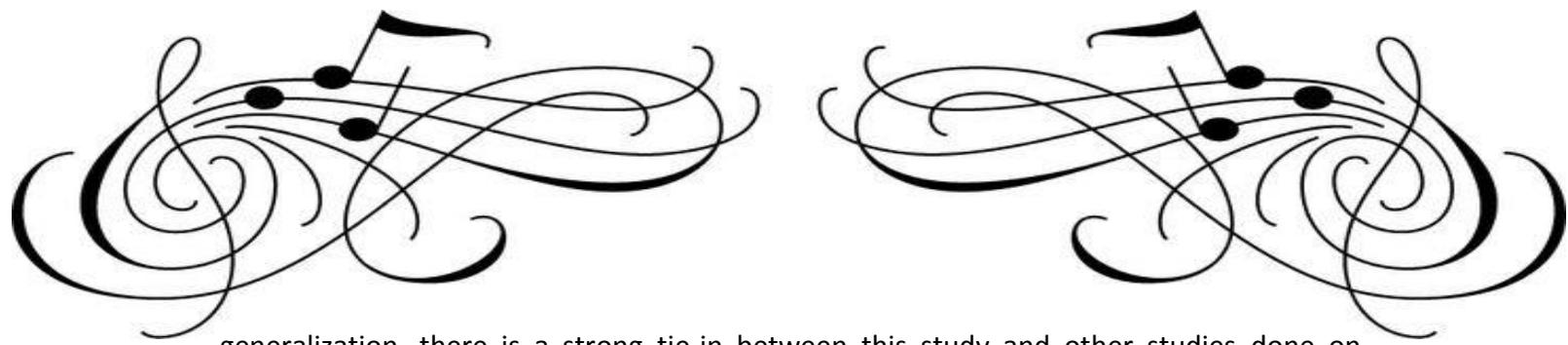
P.J. Rentfrow and S.D. Gosling did a study about a decade ago where participants were asked to get to know each other over a period of six weeks. The most common topic that people used to familiarize themselves with others was what kind of music they liked. This tied in with a second part of the study where the question of music and its relation to a person’s personality was discussed. Participants were asked to judge people based on



their top ten favorite songs, which was compared to a standard personality test called the “Five Factor Model”, which studies a person’s openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability. The study showed that music was a pretty accurate way to portray the aspects of one’s personality, with openness to experience being the easiest to analyze, followed by extraversion and emotional stability. (Dean, 2007)

This infographic is associated with a study done at Heriot-Watt University on how different genres of music correspond to our personalities. While this is a lot of





generalization, there is a strong tie-in between this study and other studies done on introversion and extraversion. One such study, done by Marti Olsen Laney, Psy.D., shows that introverts and extroverts “process stimulations via ... different pathway[s]” of the brain, while another study explains that introverts gain energy from being alone while extroverts gain it from being with people. This data helps explain why people who normally listen to pop, rap, folk or jazz, which are more mainstream genres of music, are supposedly more outgoing than those who listen to heavy metal, dance, or classical music. (Cooper, 2013) The people I surveyed were asked to look at this infographic and say whether or not the information was relatable. As a common consensus, the surveyed group stated that the chart was too generalized to relate to, with one person saying that they “feel that generalizations on personality types need more research to feel conclusive.”

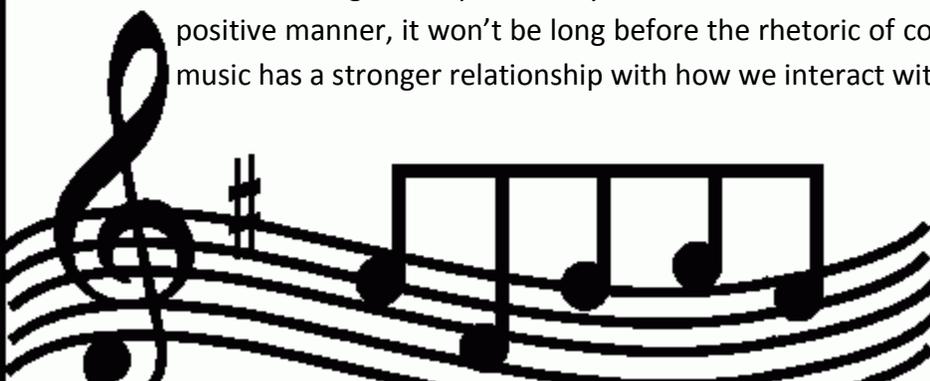
The Music Makes the Man

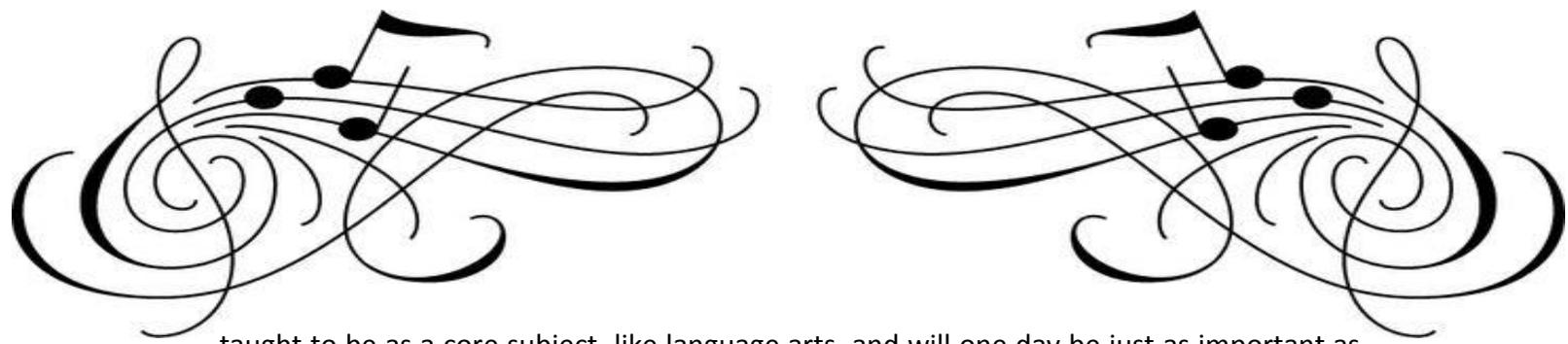
Interestingly enough, while there is plenty of research done on how a person’s personality affects the music they listen to, there is very little scientific study done on how the music affects a person’s personality. Chamorro-Premuzic states that the reason for this is that “almost every study conducted to date has classified musical preferences according to established musical genres, but such categories have no psychological value ... musical genres are there to describe music, not people.” (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2011)

It’s a shame because I feel that music is just as important to the creation of your personality as the other factors that make you who you are today. As an infant, in a similar manner to how your fluency in languages is based on what you hear people speak, the music you hear should affect your psyche in the ways that have been researched. It could also possibly affect the way a person speaks if they grew up listening to specific cues and tones constantly, even to the point of possibly influencing the key of their voice.

What a Musical World

Personality has a lot to do with the rhetoric of music and how it is used. The interaction between the two is almost seamless in that music is a part of the puzzle of understanding one’s personality. If studies on these subjects continue to progress in a positive manner, it won’t be long before the rhetoric of communication is changed so that music has a stronger relationship with how we interact with one another. Music will be





taught to be as a core subject, like language arts, and will one day be just as important as a critical analysis tool as the rhetorical appeals created by Aristotle long ago.

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